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Hong Kong

Market Development Reports

Hong Kong Suspends Poultry Imports from the United States

2004

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Report Highlights:

Hong Kong suspended the processing of applications for all U.S. poultry meat imports effective February 11, 2004. In a meeting with the ATO directors, Hong Kong government officials stated that if the second avian influenza case in Delaware also proved to be low pathogenic, it would be a favorable factor for them to consider to resume normal trade, provided that there are no more new outbreaks. Pipeline shipments shipped prior to February 11 will be allowed, except from the State of Delaware. No Delaware shipments after January 12 will be allowed. Cooked poultry and eggs are not restricted.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Unscheduled Report
Hong Kong [HK1]
[HK]

The second case of avian influenza in Delaware prompted the Hong Kong government to suspend all live birds and poultry meat imports from the United States effective February 11, 2004. Hong Kong had just announced on February 8 (GAIN 4004) that all poultry imports from the State of Delaware were suspended following the first case of avian influenza in Delaware. The ATO Acting Director initiated a meeting with the Deputy Secretary for Health, Welfare and Food Bureau on February 13. In the meeting, the ATO explained that the first avian influenza case in Delaware was confirmed to have been caused by a low pathogenic strain of H7N2. It does not warrant a ban on U.S. poultry imports. The Hong Kong representative responded that the temporary suspension of processing applications for U.S. poultry imports was a precautionary measure for public health. The Hong Kong government needs to be seen as having a consistent policy in handling products from infected areas.

A Summary of the Meeting

The ATO updated the Hong Kong government on the avian influenza cases in Delaware. She explained the low pathogenicity feature of the H7N2 of the first avian influenza case and the location of the outbreaks. Given the low pathogenicity nature of the strain, she requested that the Hong Kong government lift the ban on U.S. poultry imports. A full set of handouts providing an update of avian influenza outbreaks in Delaware was delivered to Hong Kong government officials.

Referring to the briefing given by Hong Kong government officials to all consulate officials on February 12, the ATO expressed disappointment that Hong Kong included the United States on their list of avian influenza infected areas. She reiterated that the current outbreak in Delaware was low pathogenic and was different from the H5N1 that was affecting a number of Asian countries. The ATO also pointed out that the avian influenza case in Pennsylvania was not confirmed.

The Deputy Secretary of the Health, Welfare and Food Bureau responded that the temporary suspension on U.S. poultry imports was a precautionary measure for public health. Also, they have to be consistent in their policy in treating poultry meat imports from various avian influenza infected areas.

He reiterated that the Hong Kong government did not include "import ban" in its trade philosophy. They were fully aware of the tremendous negative impact on trade. He quoted that 47 percent of Hong Kong's poultry meat supplies relied on U.S. imports. He later on clarified that the trade suspension measure on poultry meat does not impact eggs or fully cooked chicken products. However, cooked chicken products may be subject to a "hold and test" policy. For the products they sample, products will not be released to the market until test results proved negative.

For pipeline shipments, the Hong Kong government will not accept shipments of poultry meat products from Delaware which departed the United States 21 days prior to the outbreak date of the index case. The date of first detection of the disease symptoms was February 2. Dr. Chung of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department explained that the OIE laid down 21 days as the incubation period for avian influenza. As for shipments originating from other parts of the United States, products must have been shipped prior to February 11 to be accepted.

Conclusion

The Hong Kong government seemed willing to consider reverting its decision to allow U.S. poultry imports provided that tests of the second avian influenza case in Delaware is proved low pathogenic. They also wanted us to provide them with measures adopted to prevent

avian influenza outbreaks, which would serve as ammunition to explain to the public. However, they hinted that the United States' current ban on Hong Kong bird imports and any new avian influenza outbreaks in the United States would make it difficult to change their position.